FROM EARLY IRANIAN CINEMA TO THE ACCENTED CINEMA: AN INTERVIEW WITH PROFESSOR HAMID NAFICY

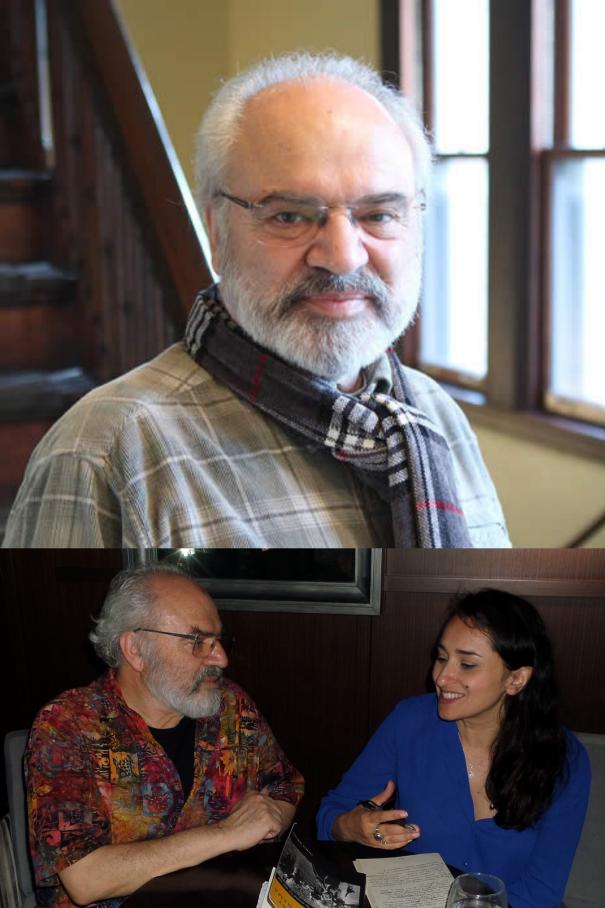## Professor Naficy was interviewed for *sinecine* by Özde Çeliktemel-Thomen

Abstract

Hamid Naficy, a leading authority in cultural studies, media, and cinema, was interviewed by Özde Çeliktemel-Thomen during the first International Conference on Early Cinema in the Balkans and Near East, which met in Athens in June, 2015. Naficy's thoughts, especially those appearing in his latest books (Naficy 2011, 2012), point to parallels between the history of early Iranian cinema and the history of Middle Eastern/Balkan cinema. In the interview, Naficy discusses how his theory of "accented cinema" is linked to world cinema and the films of Yılmaz Güney, Tevfik Başer, and Fatih Akın.

Erken Dönem İran Sinemasından Aksanlı Sinemaya: Hamid Naficy ile Söyleşi

Öz

Kültürel çalışmalar, medya ve sinema alanındaki çalışmalarıyla tanınan Hamid Naficy ile yapılan bu söyleşiyi Özde Çeliktemel-Thomen Haziran 2015'te Atina'daki Uluslası Balkanlar ve Ortadoğu'da Erken Dönem Sinema Konferansı esnasında gerçekleştirdi. Naficy'nin görüşleri, bilhassa son kitaplarındaki (Naficy 2011, 2012), erken dönem İran sinemasının Ortadoğu ve Balkanlar'daki sinema tarihleriyle paralel noktaları olduğunu ön plana çıkarmaktadır. Söyleşide, dünya sineması ile Yılmaz Güney, Tevfik Başer ve Fatih Akın gibi yönetmenlerin filmlerinden Naficy'nin "accented cinema" teorisi bağlamında bahsedilir.

Özde Çeliktemel-Thomen is a PhD student at University College London. This interview was conducted in June 2015 during the first International Conference on Early Cinema in the Balkans and Near East in Athens.

Hamid Naficy is a leading authority in cultural studies of diaspora, exile, and postcolonial cinemas and media, and of Iranian and Middle Eastern cinemas and media. His areas of research and teaching include these topics as well as documentary and ethnographic cinemas. He has published nearly a dozen books (some award-winning) and scores of book chapters and journal articles. In addition, he has lectured widely nationally and internationally and his works have been cited and reprinted extensively and translated into many languages. Naficy has also produced many educational films and experimental videos and participated in major international film festivals, curated film series, and initiated the annual Iranian film festivals in Los Angeles in 1990 and in Houston in 1992.

(http://www.arthistory.northwestern.edu/faculty/hamid-naficy.html Last Accessed on June 15 2015)

Özde Çeliktemel-Thomen: Thank you very much for accepting this interview. We're here at the International Conference on Early Cinema in the Balkans and Near East. You had a wonderful keynote lecture about the Iranian silent cinema. Before going into more specific questions about your works and theories let's talk about your academic life. Do you have any turning points and ruptures in your academic life that you want to share with us? You've worked at different institutions in Iran and the US. Currently you teach at Northwestern University. How would you describe your academic experience as an Iranian scholar in the US?

Hamid Naficy: Couple of questions rolled into one. In terms of ruptures, I would say, I did my undergraduate studies at USC, University of Southern California in Los Angeles. I did my MFA in film and television production at UCLA, where I made a number of experimental and documentary films. For my thesis I made a computer animated film, *Salamander Syncope* (1971), in the days that computers were basically accounting machines. I was able enlist into my project Leonard Kleinrock, a professor in the computer science department at UCLA who was running a special hot shot unit of computer programmers. He was working on a project that eventually became one of the first nodes of the Internet at UCLA. In fact, the graduate student in this unit who did the programming for what became my MFA, Vint Cerf, is now senior vice president of Google. So it was a very heady era and the first portable video tape machines had been created by Sony. I made most of my films on

video, on half inch reel to reel video. They were all very philosophical. In the 60s, I lived in a commune, in a leftist and hippie commune in Los Angeles. One of my films, *Ellis Island* (1969), is a documentary about that commune, named in the title. The name comes from the Ellis Island, which is the island that through which probably some 40 percent of the Americans were admitted into the country. Because a lot of the people who were living in that commune were foreigners, émigrés, or alienated Americans who were not happy with the war in Vietnam, the commune's name was appropriate. And we were part of the counter culture movement. I had a very interesting adventurous life.

But, then, in terms of ruptures that you asked me, after I finished my MFA, I worked in the US for a year. I was very unhappy with Vietnam War and with life in the US. So it just happened that I received an invitation to go to Iran, to help start a new university, a multi-media university. In 1973, I went to Iran and began what became a very important part of my life, working on planning this university, the Free University of Iran, which eventually was created. We took our first students in the late1970s. By the time the revolution happened in 1979 we had taken two years of students. The university was shut down because of allegation that it was an imperialist enterprise, or some such a thing. Returning to Iran in 1973 was a rupture in terms of the disruption in my life and continued education in the US because I had to leave Kelly in the US (Kelly Edwards, Professor Naficy's wife). I went on my own. There was another rupture, again, when right before the Islamic revolution, the Free University agreed to a sabbatical for me. I didn't know that there would be a revolution. I mean, there was unrest in the streets, but we didn't know that the Shah was going to be gone so quickly, within six months. So, soon after I came back to the US and to Kelly, the Shah was gone. We stayed, and this represents another rupture. And I worked for a number of years producing and directing a television program in Los Angeles. At the same time I published a book on media images of Iran in nonfiction films and television news and documentaries. It is called Iran Media Index (1984).

ÖÇT: Yes, you mention about that in your book. You had an annotated filmography. Is that the one?

HN: That's the one. I worked for 5 years on that. It's a great source for filmmakers and historians of modern Iran. You could do that for Turkey. There are so many newsreels and actualities, so many nonfiction and fiction films that portray Arabs, Muslims, Iranians and Turks and others, in a very odd, derogatory, and biased way.

ÖÇT: Which years did you cover in that book?

HN: It's from 1900 to 1981. There are some 3500 film titles that I discovered on Iran alone.

ÖÇT: So this is the representation of Iran in Western media mostly. Does it only cover the US?

HN: The USA and England mostly. And these are all non-fiction films and documentaries and some over thirty years of nightly newscasts on TV.

ÖÇT: This is interesting. The time period you covered is different. But I wonder what happened after 9/11 in the US. Not only the representation of Iran, but in terms of the Islamic countries' representation in Western or American media.

HN: That's worth studying. Certainly Middle Eastern scholars should begin work on that. But, you know, before the 1979 revolution in Iran there was scant television news on Iran. News is driven by crisis and self interest. In 1972, for example, news about Iran on the nightly newscasts of the American television network amounted to only around 4 minutes in the whole year. However, by the time the revolution succeeded in 1979, it had reached nearly 400 minutes for the year. Likewise, the news that each of the three American TV networks aired nightly about American citizens held hostage in Tehran soon after the revolution, amounted to 4 minutes a night (out of a 22 minutes nightly newscast).

ÖÇT: The US diplomats were kidnapped.

HN: Yes, they were held hostage in their own embassy. The news media has been very responsive to Iran. Not only covering the events but also in creating certain impressions. For example during the hostages, every night American newscasts would show behind the shoulder of the news anchor, like Walter Cronkite or Frank Reynolds so forth, an image of a blind folded American with the number of days that the Americans were held hostage. Every night, the network anchors would refer to the number of the days the Americans were held hostage in Iran. In this way, every night people were reminded that Americans were captives of Iranians. So the image of Iranians in the media became very negative, in some ways deservedly so. Taking hostages of diplomats is really not a good idea, it's illegal and immoral. The result of it for the Iranians in the USA was that there was a lot of hostility towards Iranians.

ÖÇT: Have you felt that hatred as an Iranian academic in those days?

HN: Actually that's one thing that I should say that American academia was still much more liberal than the larger society or the news media. So I rarely

encountered any hostility within academia. Since I hung around academics or television and film production people who are more liberal than the larger population I didn't encounter any serious hostility. But a lot of Iranians felt it and a lot of them camouflaged who they were, dying their hair blonde, changing their names, saying they were from Greece, Italy, Mexico or some other place.

ÖÇT: So you've been making films and producing scholarly works. You haven't said this one or that one. Prolifically you continued to produce in both areas, practiced filmmaking and wrote in the cinema field. Let's talk about your recent book. *A Social History of Iranian Cinema* (2011), composed of 4 volumes. During your lecture at the conference you talked about "the Artisanal Era" which is in the first volume. It seems to me that you follow a chronology based on political formations in Iran and at the same time you choose certain historical moments that were turning points for Iranian cinema. How did you make the chronological decision? You also cover the contemporary era. How did it come to this end?

HN: The volumes cover a long period, over 100 years. So it was important to keep a sense of chronology so that people would see the evolution and emergence of trends. There were basically two approaches that I could take for history of this period. One would be to focus on socio-political evolution and the other would be to center on the film industry evolution. There were two revolutions in Iran in this period, the 1905-1911 Constitutional Revolution and the 1979 Islamic Revolution. If I were paying attention to only one, or to frame my whole work on socio-political chronology, then the books would be very socio-political, not taking enough consideration of the cinematic. On the other hand, if I had focused on the cinematic development only; then, I'd have a silent era book and a sound era book, which then wouldn't reflect some of the socio-political changes that were occurring. So I decided to combine these two frames, namely socio-political and cinema and film industry to create a four-volume book that included both approaches. So I included the emergence, evolution, and demises of Iranian socio-political and cinematic developments, including the role of ethno religious minorities, languages, regions, genders on the screen, behind the screen, and in cinemas.

My contract with the publisher was for a one volume book. As the book grew I talked the chief-editor at Duke University. I have to admire them for their understanding the situation and even for their encouraging me, saying, "Well, this is a lifetime project. You worked on it for over 30 years. It doesn't happen this way very often, so we'll raise funds to publish it. You raise funds too." So I went to my Deans for funds. They raised funds. The whole objective was

to make the books priced under 30 USD each. So collectively they would be under 100 USD for a paperback, making it affordable for college students. That's what they did. I was very happy with that.

ÖÇT: In the book your personal story in relation to cinema is fascinating. At the same time you shed light on this socio-political life in Iran via your story, your experience with cinema. What made you to include your autobiography? Because it's very fascinating but also very personal, revealing of you and your life.

HN: It reveals too much?

ÖÇT: It reveals the necessary information, of course. I can hear your voice which is so nice between the reader and the book. Hearing the voice of the author is very novel. How come you wanted to add that?

HN: That's a good observation. History is written by historians, and historians have a point of view. Often, this point of view is ignored or pushed to the background, so you actually don't know who's speaking in this narrative. As if history is authorless. It's just like when you watch a fiction film, which offers itself as the real world, saying, "This is the real world of this story and there's no author in it." A Hollywood film doesn't remind you that you're watching a film. It wants you to think that you're part of this, you're in that film. You've identified with the characters for the two hours that the film's going. You're not reminded of your sorrows, of your problems, of your unemployment. You're just in that world. However, when you're writing history you can't do that. You have to acknowledge where you're coming from, what point of view you have.

ÖÇT: Let's start from "the theory of artisanal mode of production". What is it? How did those already forms of traditional art and crafts contribute to the Iranian silent cinema within the context of artisanal mode of production?

HN: Pioneers of cinema were multifunctional and artisanal. Often, they imported films, exhibited films; they filmed and edited the films themselves. They sometimes even delivered live narration in the cinemas for the audiences, and they sometimes acted in their own films. It was really a one man show in many ways.

ÖÇT: For instance you mention Sani al-Saltaneh and what he did seems to me very similar to Sigmund Weinberg's practice in the Ottoman Empire. He was a producer, cinematographer, distributor, and a cinema-house owner. There are similarities between the two.

HN: That was exactly why I gave the talk here at this conference. I think that this mode of production I identified is something that is probably also the case in Egypt, Turkey and perhaps in some other Balkan and Middle East and North African countries; where you have large and diverse population in contact with the West (and with each other). I thought it would be a useful model.

ÖÇT: I think it's a useful model that's why this volume is so exciting. We can easily observe some models that are corresponding for early cinema period in the Ottoman Empire. Like Fuat Uzkınay's early filmmaking. He was acting similar to master craftsmen that you describe. He started his career at Central Military Office of Cinema (Merkez Ordu Film Dairesi) which was like a workshop, unlike the studios of the US. What you've described for multifunctional pioneers of cinema is similar to the Office of Cinema case, as well. You give us some inspirational ideas. Let's move on to royal patronage and Mozaffar al-Din Shah. How important was the royal patronage for the development of Iranian cinema?

HN: I think it goes back a long way. A lot of great Iranian art, such as great poets and great miniature painters, were funded by the royalty of the time. They were thus free from the pressures of the market and of low taste. However, they were sometimes mistreated, jailed or even were killed by their patrons. In addition, patronage at times distorted the art, by requiring loyalty to the king. In the case of Mozaffar al-Din Shah, his father Naser al-Din Shah was a photographer himself. He took photographs and worked in the court darkroom himself. There are many albums that were left from him. He ruled for several decades and had about 250 wives. He photographed many of them in the royal court's andarun (inner quarter), something that nobody else could have done because of the power of the court and restrictive gender relations. For the King himself, he could take photos and print them. There was also an official court photographer, an Akkasbashi who worked in the court's photographic atelier. So there was a history for support of the visual arts and an institutional model for it. When Mozaffar al-Din Shah, Naser al-Din's son, became Shah he travelled to Europe, taking with him his royal Akkasbashi. In the Paris Universal Exposition in 1900 they saw films, which fascinated the Shah who ordered the Akkasbashi to buy film equipment and films to bring back to Iran. In Iran Akkasbashi began to make films and to show them to the court. In this case, early cinema was helped partly by royal patronage. There was also Sani al-Saltaneh Tehrani, an antique dealer, who traveled to Europe and imported new products, amongst them film camera/projector and films. However, he was against the absolute monarchy of the Qajar dynasty and worked against

it. That's how his cinema was shut down within a month.

ÖÇT: How about Western missionaries? They also exhibited films in Iran, right?

HN: They did. Even before film, Western missionaries showed colored, hand painted lantern slides that told the stories of the Bible, including the life of Jesus Christ. I spent a few weeks in Philadelphia researching in the Presbyterian Historical Archive. I saw some of those slides that they had shown in Iran during their "lantern service," accompanied with live narration and music. I read the minutes of missionaries' meetings and diaries of women missionaries who traveled through the Turkish area of Iran, Iranian Azerbaijan, during the Constitutional Revolution in 1905, holding lantern services from village to village.

ÖÇT: Do you think that they collaborated with the commercial cinema owners? Did these missionaries exchange films? Is there any clue?

HN: I don't know whether or not they showed commercial films. But they were interested in showing slides and they taught music, choral singing, and they imported illustrated Bibles printed in Beirut. Following these technological innovations they were looking for new media to inculcate their message. The French Catholic mission established the first Iranian public cinema in Tabriz in 1900, naming it the Soleil Cinema. There are records showing that later on in the 1920s missionary schools were using films to teach and entertain and also to promote Western culture and ideology.

ÖÇT: The same happened in Turkey also. In the mid 1920s, schools owned by non-Muslims were using films for propaganda purposes. Records from the British and French archives show us that. Let's look at Muslim clerics' reaction to cinema. This is a cliché. I always get this question about the Ottoman case. Was there any reaction against cinema in Iran? For instance you mention about a description of cinema as a "Satanic work".

HN: A leading cleric, Sheikh Fazlollah Nuri, lived around the time of the Constitutional Revolution (1905-1911) when there were a lot of public demonstrations and intellectual upheaval against the reigning system of absolute monarchy. He turned against this movement. Part of his reaction may have been political. But he was a conservative, religious figure, who thought that Western technology, including cinema, are weapons to stupefy the Muslims, and he vehemently preached against this movement. In 1909, he was beheaded. Before that happened, however, he instigated the first case of film censorship that we know of, in 1904, when he heard that Sani al-

Saltaneh was showing a film of Western women without veil. He put out a fatwa against his cinema. Within a month Sani al-Saltaneh's cinema was closed. This shows part of the artisanal production method, which is the short life span of artisanal enterprise.

ÖÇT: It seems like you rely on interviews, biography even an autobiography that we mentioned. How did you approach these sources as a scholar? For instance did you have the question of accuracy, did you cross-examine them? Have you ever seen any problems with the source, diaries or memoirs that you've read?

HN: I tried to find more than one source for each case especially if the topic was controversial. Because I've been a filmmaker myself I was able to gain the confidence of a lot of filmmakers. Because I was able to speak their language and address their concerns. I knew the process of film making; I knew the difficulties and complexities of issues such as funding, production process, and distribution and exhibition. I think that paved the way for me being able to interview them. But I also had a historical and analytical point of view. I think that the two were conducive to getting them to talk. I think in the absence of documents interviews are good. But you're right interviews could be self-promoting. You have to judge the interviews against other documents and analytical frames. You can also judge them against the films.

ÖÇT: You need to be conscious and alert when using the sources.

HN: Yeah, even then mistakes creep in. Right now the book is being translated. The first volume has been translated into Persian and is in distribution. During the translation we discovered some mistakes in names or in dates. A few months ago, Duke University Press reached me, they're reprinting the book. Here is the chance to correct such small mistakes. So I was able to reread and discover a few more mistakes, so that's the next step: trying to correct and verify those things.

ÖÇT: Let's look at the spectators a little bit. Tom Gunning's cinema of attraction is fitting into the case of early cinema. He mentions that cinema shows itself to a spectator by representing something different and unique. He refers to specific films, such as *The Great Train Robbery* (Edwin S. Porter, 1903) etc. What were the Iranian spectators' comments about their first encounter with early films? How did they react? Were they curious about cinema of attraction?

HN: They were, and the only evidence that I have for that was the memoirs and travel diaries of the first viewers and film pioneers. And I interviewed a

very famous writer in 1984, Mohammad Ali Jamalzadeh. When I interviewed him, he was 94. He had watched films at Sani al-Saltaneh's cinema. He remembered watching a silent film showing a steam roller, rolling over a man, flatting him like a cardboard. And then suddenly the guy was standing up again. That was the cognitive shock. How could that be? He was just run over by this machine and then in the next moment he's standing up alive again. He said that he was so shocked by this that he ran home to his father, at the age of 12. His father, a famous progressive cleric, asked, "What did you see?" and he said that he described what he had seen on the screen. Then, the father used his hands and fingers against the light to cast a shadow on the wall, saying, "You know about shadow play? You've seen it before. Well, that's what this is. This is a form of shadow play." In some way, this analogy assuaged the little boy. There are also other accounts, which I don't know how true they are, of spectator reaction to the pulling of a train into the station in the Lumière Brother's film, *Arrival of a Train at La Ciotat* (1895). Apparently, people ran out of the cinema for they thought the train was going to run over them. But I don't know if that's true or people had borrowed that from Western sources.

ÖÇT: This story is similar to the one we have in Istanbul from journalist Ercüment Ekrem Talu. This anecdote is from the early years of cinema, when Talu was around the age of 8-9. He goes to see this same Lumière film with his brother, *Arrival of a Train at La Ciotat*, and another Lumière film, *Spanish Bullfight* (1897) at a pub in Istanbul. He mentions that they were first shocked but they didn't move and kept watching. He mentions about this dark and gas-smelly room which made it difficult to watch the films. Their eyes were hurting and itching. I think that there are similarities.

HN: Was it shown in a cafe with smoking cigarettes?

ÖÇT: It was at a pub, named Sponeck Birahanesi in Istanbul, Pera. The smoke was mainly due to the gas-lit room, probably there were smokers as well. Pera is a multicultural district, with luxurious stores and restaurants of the time. It's also close to the harbor so there were almost always people from different backgrounds and ethnicity. Film screenings in Istanbul also took place at coffeehouses or open air cinemas like the one you showed during your lecture. Let's look at your other works. You're good at reinventing theories and terms. "Accented Cinema," which you coined is an emerging genre. You look at filmmaking in the "Third World", and among displaced individuals who make films in the West. In your *Accented Cinema* book, under the subheading "Homeland as Prison," you also analyze Yılmaz Güney's films. How do you think Güney's films fit into this accented cinema genre?

HN: Idea for the accented cinema was to pay attention to the displacement of people which is a common phenomenon in our increasingly globalized world, in the 20th and 21st centuries. I was looking at the United Airlines magazine last week. In the lead article, I think it was the chairman of the board who was claiming that every year it transports over 140 million people around the world. This number is almost twice the population of Iran. This is an incredible situation: just imagine a population that size being airborne every year.

ÖÇT: This is only one airline.

HN: Yes, if you add the carrying capacity of the other airlines, you will perhaps have something like the equivalent to the population of the entire European continent in the air annually, not to mention all the refugees who are on the move now due to wars, revolution, and terrorism in the Middle East and North Africa. The point is that this displacement of millions of people is a major phenomenon that is a part of globalization. And from the get go cinema has been a diasporic thing in many ways. Somehow the immigrants have been drawn to cinema, the American studio system; the heads of all the first five major studios were Jewish immigrants from Eastern Europe or Russia. These had been involved in retail business before they came to the US. They applied the model of retail, in selling clothes etc. to film. They treated every film like a pair of shoes in distributing them. This was because minorities, whether internal or external minorities (exiles and émigrés) oftentimes came with certain class and cultural capital, certain trade and knowledge which they put to good use in the film industry. It's very different now, of course, for we have many homeless or persecuted and poor people forced to emigrate from North Africa and Middle East trying to go to Italy or somewhere else. There was another factor for success of minorities in the film industries in various countries: The motion picture and entertainment business in most countries were not considered to be mainstream businesses. Because they were associated with the life of "immorality", "sexuality", "chicanery," upstanding citizens shunned these businesses. So, the mainstream society, the Muslims in the Middle East and the Christians in the West, didn't want to go into the entertainment and movie businesses, as a result minorities filled in those jobs. That was another reason that Jews became dominant in Hollywood early on because other avenue of earning money was closed to them. In Iran, too, ethno religious minorities were prominently represented in the film industry for similar reasons. The majority of musicians and dancers in Iran were either Jews or Armenians.

ÖÇT: The same in the Ottoman era.

HN: But it's interesting. When the Iranians went into exile after the Revolution of 1979, a majority of them ended up in Los Angeles, many of them entertainers, actors, and filmmakers. They formed very interesting interethnic groups, like Iranian pop music bands. The players in many of these were Iranian Armenians, the singers were Iranian Muslims, and the producers were Iranian Jews. So these interethnic subnational groups worked together to create an Iranian band in the diaspora. So the point of accented cinema is to pay attention to these dynamics of arts, culture, and the constitutive role of immigrants or minorities in them. Despite the fact that there are multiple directors from sending countries in terms of religion and language and culture and they settle in different countries, there is something common in their films, to which I gave the name "accent". This "accent" is not the "accent" of language, but the style of the films and mode of the production of the films. So I talked about how these films were made interstitially. Sort of like the artisanal era in Iran, except this production mode is in between the society of host country and the host country's film industry.

A lot of accented filmmakers are not working in the studio system or within the mainstream film industry; instead, they work interstitially and independently. They use family money; they ask their friends for support. They ask their family to be in the film. They find various ways to make the film that result in certain anomalies in their production, certain amateurishness in their film style. That amateurism itself is part of their aesthetics. That's one part of the charm in the film. In terms of the narrative of accented films, many of them are retrospective; many of them look back, not look forward. Many of them are multi-lingual and multi-cultural. They require subtitles. So the audience not only watches the film but has to read the screen.

Another feature that relates to your question, about Yılmaz Güney is that, a lot of the films from at least the 1980s of Turkish filmmakers followed the closed form of film making. By a closed form of film making I mean either filming in small spaces, like in a single room or in small apartments, the spaces the Turks generally lived in Germany. Part of sense of claustrophobia in these films comes from the closed, small spaces, and part of it comes from the closed way of filming that space, using very tight shots, frame within frames, etc. Such strategies would make it look as if the character is in prison. So I cite examples of *40 M² Deutschland*, (*40 M² Almanya*, Tevfik Başer, 1986). The film's title, *40 M² Deutschland* is the space that the family has in Germany. Then that space gets smaller for the woman by the way the husband rapes the wife. If I recall correctly, the whole scene is filmed in a single tight shot. As he pumps her from behind, her head goes down further and further, until her

head goes out of the frame; the frame becomes just like a prison. There were several other films by filmmakers from Turkey shot in Germany, which were very closed and dystopian.

And Güney was an interesting case to cite, in a way he was imprisoned at home; in fact he was imprisoned. In *The Road* (*Yol*, Şerif Gören, 1982), the whole of Turkey is a prison house for the five released prisoners, for they have no place to go. Wherever they go somebody is after them, especially harrowing is the sequence with Emine under the snow. The only one who gains some freedom is the Kurdish character who escapes the country on horseback to Syria. In fact, Güney used a scheme similar to leave-taking from the prison shown in the film to escape to Europe where he edited *Yol*. He made his next, and final film, *The Wall* (*Duvar*, 1983) in exile in France. *The Wall* is set almost entirely in a prison in France, but represents a Turkish prison. Somehow, for him prison becomes the place for the country, a metaphor for human society in general.

ÖÇT: These are the films from the 1980s. How about Fatih Akın's cinema?

HN: Now we're talking about a different generation, a generation that is born and raised in Germany. You could call them, as they are sometimes referred to in immigration studies as "1.5 Generation" or "2.0 Generation," referring either to those who were born elsewhere but immigrated as children to the host country where they were raised or to those who were born in the host country to émigré parents. So what that means is that these guys first of all they don't know Turkey, except in second hand.

ÖÇT: Having visited it during summer holidays.

HN: That's right. Second of all they are German citizens; they have a right to speak and to criticize Germans and Germany.

ÖÇT: Some have dual citizenship.

HN: They have that. And they are not apologetic about being Turkish like their parents who came from villages, who didn't know the German language, who felt ashamed. They couldn't speak at all. These guys are fluent in German. They know the German way of life. Germany is their country.

ÖÇT: Yes but at the same time they have a double identity.

HN: That's right. That what makes it complicated like in *Head-on* (*Gegen die Wand*, *Duvara Karşı*, Fatih Akın, 2004). You have two different Germans even amongst this generation. You have two different types, one a girl who is

very rebellious, the other a guy who is violent. And yet they are both Germans, but not quite; they are haunted by Turkey and its tradition and culture. They are people in between, each is incomplete. They have the tensions of, and the craziness of attraction. What makes that film really interesting is this L'amour Fou, the "Mad Love" which is destructive instead of being constructive; rather than bringing them together it tears them apart. German society doesn't accept them fully, neither does Turkey, they are marginal in both.

ÖÇT: How about Fatih Akın's other films apart from *Head-on?* For instance *Short Sharp Shock* (*Kurz und schmerzlos, Kısa ve Acısız* , Fatih Akın, 1998) you see this displacement of individuals from different backgrounds. In this film there is a group of friends with origins from Greece, Serbia, and Turkey. Basically, an immigrant community in Germany. So what he makes is fitting in this accented cinema genre.

HN: I think so. Also in *Crossing the Bridge: The Sound of Istanbul* (*İstanbul Hatırası: Köprüyü Geçmek*, Fatih Akın, 2005). He has one of the advantages of the accented cinema, the privilege to critique society. Because accented filmmakers are either independent or marginal to society, or they take themselves outside of the society—work interstitially—they can look at it with an objective, even critical point of view. They are often the sources of contrast to the society in which they live. Sometimes they critique themselves and the insiders, too, and they get hammered for it. They are charged with airing the dirty laundry of the ethnic group to the majority.

ÖÇT: Especially with Fatih Akın's last film. *The Cut* (*Kesik*, Fatih Akın, 2014), which is about the Armenian genocide. If you look at the press, most of the questions he received were about from which side he was. His answer was "I don't have to be on one side, I'm telling you a story." So you're right.

It was a pleasure to have this interview. Thank you very much for this wonderful time.

HN: Thanks, I enjoyed it, too.

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